The Painters Corner — Malerwinkel

Entrance to the High Castle of Füssen

FÜSSEN

The High Castle of Füssen

under the U. S. Army

Keller-Druck Füssen

Füssen wasn't far behind in the matter of establishing a print-shop. In 1502, the Emporer Maximilian, who frequently took residence in or near here to hunt falcons, herons, bear, and other game, thought that the city which he had adopted, ought to have a printing-press. This was promptly attended to. The Füssener Blatt, the local paper, has been continuously puplished since 1838.

Füssen in Winter

It was here also, that the first really efficient mail-service in central Europe began to operate with the Taxis-Post. Taxis originated this service, which covered much of the area, and some of his descendants still live back in the mountains. From Taxis' mail service, much was learned about the carrying of the mail. Those of us who had to wait seven weeks for mail during March, April and May, believe, that there's still much to be learned. It's a long way back to 1496, when old Kaiser Maximilian had the pony-mail make its first trip. Reminds one of the Pony Express taking off from St. Joe about 350 years later.

But, Füssen had its share of war too, during those days. In the year 1525 the peasants war raged through Germany, brought on chiefly by the underpriviledged "third" or more people. The peasants took Füssen, with a lot of other South Bavarian towns. But eventually the revolution was defeated, and Germany slipped into her former habits of life. This war was economic. But it was followed 21 years later by the Smalcald War, in which Schertlin von Burtenback took Füssen again. This was a religious war. However, it did not reach the intensity of the 30-years war.

But that 30-years war! During the first 12 years, Füssen didn't feel it any more than it did 1939—1944. Some troops had to be supplied, many other troops marched through from Austria and Italy. But otherwise it was a peaceful village in a peaceful valley. Then in 1632 Gustavus Adolphus broke through across the Danube and kept on going like the American 3rd ond 7th armies. He overran Füssen in June of that year and took it by storm. However, he overextended himself, and one month later, Bernard von Weimar recaptures the town. Again in 1646 the Swedes penetrate into the area, capture the town and proceed to their objective, the Castle Ehrenberg at Reutte. But their communications break down, they are defeated there, and flee Northward without trying to hold the town.

Often, Füssen, though not a battleground in war, changed nationalities as a result of war, or treaties of peace. So in 1803, Füssen, as several times before, was incorporated into Bavaria, losing her Austrian citizenship. Being a part of Bavaria, she was expected to supply her quota of troops to the Bavarian militia. And when in 1812 many troops passed through Füssen from Italy and Austria in preparation for the Napoleonic campaign against Moscow, this militia and many another conscript was sent by the „world conqueror" to endure the scorched earth, and terrible Russian Winter, in the cause of conquest. Not many came back.

If you have enjoyed the hospitality of the Alte Post, it will no doubt interest you to know, that many royal heads have been pillowed there. Included in the early hotel registers is the name of the Empress Marie Louise of France, with her three-year old son Francis, as they layed over here for a brief rest after their long and arduous journey from Paris to Vienna. Some of us remember a mad dash across all of France, battling through Bavaria, being in on the kill in Austria, and returning to Füssen for a rest. Where do we go from here? How many points do you have?

In 1835—36, the Crown Prince of Bavaria, who became King Maximilian the Second, lived in the High Castle in Füssen. He acquired, and rebuilt the castle Zum Schwanstein, which was renamed Hohenschwangau. Max had the castle decorated with frescoes depicting important scenes from German legend and history, done by the best artists available. Main reason you haven't been able to get in is, that the Bavarian Royal family is even now living there.

The Big White Castle — Neuschwanstein

In the same niche in the mountain chain, across the valley with its Pollat Falls, lies the big white castle Neuschwanstein. It is noted for its outstanding location, though its interior dacoration is much overdone. It was built by King Ludwig II 1869—1886, and it is difficult to understand how the decorations alone could be completed in the 17 years the castle was abuilding. It was practically a museum of art. Now it is a storage place of some millions of

dollars worth of art treasures that had been looted from occupied countries, chiefly the Louvre, now awaiting their return to their homelands since their liberation. Fortunately, it wasn't looteration. And to prevent damage, the castle has been placed, not only under guard, but also Off Limits. Some few people were able to get in with passes from higher headquarters, but even that is no longer possible. Sorry you can't get in to see it. How did I get in? I didn't! But I've read about it.

Linderhof, near Ober-Ammergau, is another castle built by Ludwig II simultaneously with Neuschwanstein, but completed some years earlier. It is done in Rococo architecture, and isn't generally considered to be in good taste, because it is unnaturally overdone, even more than Neuschwanstein. It is a small imitation of Versailles. But it's worth seeing, even if you had to pay the usual 3 Marks admission.

There are many churches in the area, that are distinctly worth seeing. Some of them are parish Churches, built and maintained primarily for the local people. Some of them are monastary churches, built and maintained chiefly for the monastaries, and others were built out in the open, with few people living in the vicinity. These are the pilgrimage churches. As examples of the latter are Maria Rain, Maria Trost, Maria Hilf, and die Wies. People came from far in order to pray for some special blessing, leaving their donations. These, together with special gift by wealthy people, enabled them to replace former small chapels with large and beautiful churches.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, Baroque and Rococo architecture flourished in this part of Germany as nowhere else. One can hardly comprehend it, unless he sees it. InFrance, particularly in Brittainy, Normandy and the Paris area, you saw many beautiful Gothic churches, the spires of which reached upwards towards the heavens with a massive, but graceful beauty. One would hardly consider the average South Bavarian church beautiful from the outside. But the interior is gay and even gaudy, with frescoes and woodcarvings in abundance. There is no stained glass, because that would shut off some of the light, which, is so essential to an appreciation of the colorful art that abounds. At the Wies, SE of Steingaden, stands what is rated as the most beautiful Rococo church in the world. It is very much worth seeing. On the other hand, the Church at Rottenbuch was originally built in Gothic, and gives all the evidences of having been a good example of good Gothic. It was redone in Rococo about 1740. It gives the impression of being overcrowded with art, a horrible example of what may happen when one tries to mix two beautiful things in the wrong way. Like a dog I once saw that was a mixture between a Pointer and an Airdale. He had the face and legs of a typical Airdale, but the rest, including his ears and tail was Pointer. Poor thing!

Northwest of Füssen lies the broad Pfronten Valley with its 13 — 16 villages and towns that all begin with Pfronten —. It is a beautiful valley lying in the shadow of Aggenstein Mountain. When you become ambitious, especially during late July and August, you might take the day off, climb over the Aggenstein, and over on the other side you will run into large meadows of Edelweiss in full bloom. That's what they tell me. But lest you climb down my throat, if you don't find any, let me warn you, that it's probably like hunting the Holy Grail. I'd expect it to be a long, long search, and you'd probably be several weeks AWOL before you find one. That's why the pressed Edelweiss are so highly prized. If you wish to see one, I have one to show you, just like the one my Dad picked in Switzerland over sixty years ago, and still keeps among his most prized possessions.

Northwest of the Pfronten Valley is Nesselwang. What poignant memories! Every morning at exactly 0700 I was awakened by the musical tinkling of a hundred cowbells, all of different tones, yet all in harmony, as they marched in column by the Hotel Bären on their way to the green pastures. That's the way to wake up! None of this, "It's time to get up!" stuff. And Nesselwang was such a fine place to hike up the mountain on Sunday mornings during church-time — for up on top was the fine little chapel Maria Trost, and in the other direction, the somewhat larger Maria Rain.

Did you climb Kalvarienberg, just South of Füssen? It was conceived and carried out under the direction of a local priest, John Baptist Graf. It' ll take about an hour and a half, but it's time well spent. Take your camera.

Similar to Crescent Lake in the Olympics, Plansee above Reutte lies among the mountains.

the Brenner Pass, and through Füssen. Rich silks, carved ivory, rugs, china and other goods that had come over the Marco Polo route, destined for the luxury trade, was plundered from these merchant caravans by robber-barons, who became very wealthy. Eventually the Fuggers and Welsers came to terms, whereby they paid a high tribute for safe conduct of their wares through this territory. Notorious among these "barons", were the Schwangaus, the Freibergs and the Hohenecks. The ruins of their castles at Falkenstein, above Pfrontenberg, and at Freiberg, above Kreuzeck, show how well their hangouts were prepared for this type of trade. They could see for miles, carefully estimate the size of the caravan, and send out sufficient strength to "take" it.

Füssen has been a cultural center of the South of Germany. In 1469 a hospital was established there by one of its leading citizens, Konrad Bayrhof. It became well known, also because of the sulphur baths, which were nearby, and which were soon developed. In recent years, these baths have attracted many tourists from all parts of Germany, but especially from England and the U.S. Had it not been for so many tourists, this area would not have had the hotel and rooming facilities, which we of the American Army have been able to enjoy (?) during the Spring of 1945.

Beautiful Füssen and surrounding area has seen many people come and go. Migrations and military leaders utilized the Füssen-Lech gateway to Austria and Italy from the very earliest times. Caesar not only conquered southern Bavaria, but also boiled some rheumatism out of his weary bones at Bad Faulenbach, which lies at the Western edge of Füssen. Already before his time, the Celts pushed through this valley, and on into Italy and Greece. When the Romans occupied this area 2000 years ago, they built a military road that ran from Italy to Augsburg — they had to keep their GI Joes busy too. Then they had to build a series of fortifications to protect this road against sabotage. Part of the road still is in good condition in the North end of Füssen. But the fortifications that stood at the Lech-crossing have long since been removed, perhaps by some other GI's, who had nothing to do.

If Caesar could come North to invade what is now Germany, the Goths, and other Germanic people could go South through this same gateway, to invade, and to bring about the downfall of the Roman Empire. This happened about 400—475. Lots of troops went through Füssen in those days, as today.

About the year 628 (some say it was 725), the monk Magnus, missionary to the Bavarians, began to christianize this area. He built a small monastary at the old Lech crossing. A settlement grew up around it. The monastary was expanded, to include by 1718, all the buildings surrounding the St. Magnus church, such as the Rathhaus, the police-building, and the apartments down toward the river from the Rathhaus. The monastary was taken from the Curch in 1803 by Napoleon, and given by him to the Prince Oettingen-Wallerstein in exchange for some estates Napoleon took from him in the Rhineland. Napoleon made a practice of this. In like manner, many monastaries of Bavaria were secularized. In 1837, the abbey church was donated by the Prince to the city of Füssen, while the monastary buildings were sold to the Baron of Ponikau a short time later. He tried to derive some income from them, but was unsuccessful, so that it finally became city property in the year 1910.

The present City Church, usually called St. Magnus Church, was built 1701 to 1711 (some say 1718. It is probable, that some of the frescoes were not completed before the latter date). It was a part of the alteration and rebuilding of the whole abbey, whose chief architectural genius was Dominicus Herkommer of Sameister, near Lechbruck (a street in Füssen is named after him).

Historically we know little about the town itself prior to 1000 AD other than the fact, that it was part of the domain of the Guelphs. Then it came under the sway of the Stauffers. The last Stauffer monarch, Konradin, pledged his estates, including Füssen, to Duke Ludwig II of Bavaria in 1268, who started the construction of a fortress on Castle Hill, above the monastery. A quarrel arose with the Bishop of Augsburg, which resulted in the Bishop taking over the monastary, castle and town in 1313. For many years, it remained the property of the Lords Bishop of Augsburg, as was the case with about 20 other castles in Bavaria. The construction of a town wall was begun in 1323, when Füssen is first spoken of as a town (Stadt). The castle continued to be expanded and improved, until it reached its present form in 1499.

About the year 1400, the activities of the robber-barons were disturbing the normal channels of trade. As a result of trade with the orient, the Fuggers and Welsers became the merchant princes of Germany, who imported their wares through Venice, thence over

It has been our priviledge to be in this area for a prolonged stay. Perhaps this book is appearing too late to serve as a guide-book. But I trust it may remain in your possession as a memento of a pretty town in a picturesque area. Perhaps you may want to come again under other circumstances. You may want to bring your wife and kids.

Here's what you can do: Climb Mountains, such as „Säuling", the Rain Valley, Aggenstein, and many others. Or swim in the lakes of Füssen, Alatsee, Alpsee, Hopfensee, Weissensee — or go boating, or fishing in these lakes; or canoe in the Lech (I tried that once in the rivers of Northern Minnesota). In the Wintertime, you can hunt deer and antelope, if they'll let you have a license. You can skate, play ice-hockey, ice-skittles. You can ski or go sleighing. You can snow-shoe over to Schwangau, at the foot of Tegel mountain and watch them feed the wild game that has come down out of the snow-covered wilds. When you are completely frozen stiff and rheumatic, you can either stay over, or come back the next summer and, like Caesar, you can thaw out those aching bones in the Sulphur-baths at Faulenbach. Perhaps I'll be seeing you there.

Feeding Deer below the White Castle
near Schwangau

prepared by 35 AAA Brigade, Martin L. Cook, acting Chaplain.